

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-15 ACDA-10 SAB-02 IO-14 DHA-02 /100 W

-----104508 200457Z /21

R 191708Z AUG 77

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3258

INFO PANCANAL

USCINCSO

UNCLAS PANAMA 5953

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PBOR, PINT, PN

SUBJECT: THE OPPOSITION REACTS TO CANAL TREATY

REF: PANAMA 5052, PANAMA 5819, PANAMA 5873

SUMMARY: IN THE WAKE OF LAST WEEK'S ANNOUNCED AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE, OPPOSITION FIGURES AND STUDENT GROUPS HAVE BEEN VOICING THEIR OPINIONS ON THE TREATY. CRITICISM CENTERS ON THE NEUTRALITY TREATY, THE CONTINUED U.S. PRESENCE IN PANAMA, AND THE IDEA THAT THE U.S. NEGOTIATED WITH A REGIME WHICH ALLEGEDLY VIOLATES HUMAN RIGHTS. A MINOR STUDENT PROTEST TOOK PLACE AT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY. END SUMMARY.

1. GOP-CONTROLLED "LA REPUBLICA" OF AUGUST 16 CARRIED A FULL-PAGE ARTICLE CONSISTING OF ANTI-TREATY STATEMENTS BY THE LAWYER CARLOS BOLIVAR PEDRESCHI, THE REVOLUTIONARY STUDENT FRONT (FER), AND BY PANAMANIAN EXILES IN MIAMI(A MIAMI "HERALD" ARTICLE ON BORIS MARTINEZ AND WINSTON ROBLES).

2. THE PEDRESCHI PIECE ADDRESSED THE FALSE ISSUE OF "PRIORITY" OF PASSAGE FOR U.S. VESSELS THROUGH THE CANAL BUT ALSO MADE STRONG CRITIQUE OF U.S. AUTHORITY TO DEFEND  
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THE NEUTRALITY OF THE CANAL. HE SAID THAT IF THE NEUTRALITY TREATY ALLOWS THE U.S. TO DEFEND THE CANAL MILITARILY, WITHOUT THE PRIOR EXPRESS AUTHORIZATION OF PANAMA, THE U.S. WOULD BE ABLE TO TAKE MILITARY ACTION ENTIRELY AT ITS OWN DISCRETION. FURTHER, IF THE TREATY DOES NOT STIPULATE THAT, IN NO CASE, CAN U.S. DEFENSE OF THE CANAL BE CARRIED OUT FROM PANAMANIAN TERRITORY, THEN PANAMA WOULD BE ACCEPTING

THE RIGHT OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT TO OCCUPY PANAMA IN THE  
NAME OF DEFENDING THE CANAL'S NEUTRALITY.

3. THE ARTICLE ON MARTINEZ AND ROBLES EXPRESSES THEIR  
INDIGNATION THAT THE U.S. WOULD NEGOTIATE WITH A REGIME THAT  
VIOLATES HUMAN RIGHTS, AND THAT THERE IS NO GUARANTEE THAT THE  
PEOPLE OF PANAMA WILL BE ABLE FREELY TO EXPRESS THEIR OPINIONS  
ABOUT THE CANAL IN A PLEBISCITE.

4. FER IS A VOCIFEROUS ULTRA-LEFTIST GROUP--UNCONNECTED WITH  
AND INDEED ANTIPATHETIC TO THE GUAYKUCHOS, TO WHOM THE  
ARTICLE WAS ATTRIBUTED IN THE HEADLINE. IT ATTACKS THE GOP  
BOTH FOR ITS REVISION OF THE LABOR CODE AND FOR GRANTING THE  
U.S. EVEN AN IOTA OF PRESENCE IN PANAMA.  
THE LANGUAGE WAS HARSH WITH THE JARGON OF MARXIST AND ANTI-  
YANKEEISMS, ATTACKING THE TREATY AND, IN GENERAL, THE GOP AND THE  
U.S.

5. REPUBLICA ALSO CARRIED AN AUGUST 16 LETTER BY THE SMALL  
CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY CALLING FOR OPEN COMMUNICATION  
CONCERNING THE DETAILS OF THE TREATY PROCESS.

6. IN CONTRAST TO THE HARD LINE TAKEN BY THE FER WAS A  
STATEMENT BY THE PANAMANIAN STUDENT FEDERATION (FEP) IN THE  
AUGUST 18 ISSUE OF "LA REPUBLICA". ALSO A FULL-PAGE ARTICLE,  
IT RECOGNIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TREATY, BUT DESCRIBED THE  
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TREATY AS "NOT THE CULMINATION OF (THEIR) STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE,  
BUT A NEW PHASE OF THE STRUGGLE." THE STATEMENT EMPHASIZED THE NEED  
TO UTILIZE RESOURCES GAINED UNDER THE TREATY FOR THE GOOD OF  
THE MASSES.

7. FOR THE LAST FEW DAYS THERE HAVE BEEN RUMORS OF STUDENT  
DEMONSTRATIONS TO TAKE PLACE AT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY. ON  
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 17 AT 1100 HRS, A GROUP OF ABOUT 15 STUDENTS  
ENTERED  
THE FOREIGN MINISTRY ANNEX WHERE U.S. AND PANAMANIAN NEGOTIATORS WERE  
DRAFTING TREATY LANGUAGE. PANAMANIAN SECRETARIES SUCCEEDED IN  
PERSUADING THE STUDENTS TO LEAVE IN AN ORDERLY FASHION,  
BUT A GROUP OF ABOUT HALF A DOZEN STUDENTS WAS  
RECEIVED BY A MINISTRY OFFICIAL LATER. AN EMBASSY  
SECRETARY ON THE SCENE OVERHEARD SOME HEATED DISCUSSION.  
THURSDAY MORNING THE NATIONAL GUARD STATIONED TWO  
OFFICERS ON THE SCENE AND ENTRANCE TO THE BUILDING  
WAS BEING MONITORED.  
JORDEN

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## Message Attributes

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**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
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**Review Markings:**  
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